

HB - 525 TESTIMONY

February 16, 2007

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am Mike Kecskes Sr. of Helena, Montana resident for 34 years. I would like to speak to you primarily as a family man and taxpayer in our great state. First of all, I would like to thank Representative Koopman for sponsoring HB 525 and bringing the important issues it represents before the legislature. The changes this bill proposes are needed and are much over-due.

I am a graduate of Montana State University and I value education. But what I observe is that higher education in Montana, as elsewhere, has been heavily skewed toward the left side of the cultural/political spectrum in recent years. This alarms me both as parent and tax-payer. Many Montanans share my concern. I believe that a higher education system that is institutionally biased against faith in God, against true family values, and against sound conservative economic and social principles ill serves the people of our great state. House Bill 525 proposes to remedy that bias and I am in favor of it.

For many years I have watched the Montana University System come to the legislature hat in hand, asking for more money. Under both Democrat and Republican administrations, they often go home with only a fraction of what they have asked for. Of course, part of that is the give-and-take of the appropriation process. But a big part of it, I believe, is a wariness, even distrust in some cases, between our university system and the legislature, and by extension, our people. There is a reason for that. Many of our people question what goes on at our universities.

Now there are many things that go on that are good, even excellent. MSU has outstanding engineering faculties and research facilities. Its School of Architecture is top notch and there are other departments that are doing great. U. of M. in Missoula is well known for its school of law, journalism, forestry, etc. During football season, the Grizzlies usually make us proud.

Nevertheless there are serious problems and troubling developments at our universities. WE see extreme environmentalists, many of them educated at the university in Missoula, with their radical agenda aimed at totally shutting down logging in Montana. At the same time hundreds of thousands of acres of our forests are dead and dying, or go up in flames during the fire season. Our people could use the hundreds of well-paying jobs these activities destroy. The loss of public wealth in timber and lumber is immense.

The situation is much the same in mining. Lawsuits by environmentalists, many of them frivolous and without merit, cause delays and loss of jobs, income and tax revenue.

We read about and see "gay pride" parades in our university towns, with their in-your-face flaunting of the homosexual life style. Some of our universities appear to embrace and promote this kind of activity.

Whether the cause is radical feminism, socialism, anti-Americanism, the bashing of our military, our faith, our way of life and so on, we find adherents and promoters of these activities right on campus.

Our universities embrace diversity when it comes to race, ethnicity, color, even sexual orientation. But when it comes to ideological or intellectual diversity, which is what a university should be all about, there is one predominant ideology. That ideology favors big government, higher and higher taxes, the limitation of individual freedom. It opposes free enterprise, lower taxes, faith in God in any form, values of family, individual responsibility and freedom.

Our people favor the latter. Yet more and more they are expected to support a system, part of which they disapprove, without question.

Some recent examples come to mind. When Rob Natelson, a distinguished professor of law at the University of Montana Law School ran for governor some years back, he was vilified and denounced by his own colleagues. Natelson was and is a principled constitutionalist, a conservative, a proponent of lower taxes and small government. The other law professors were enraged by his ideas.

Dr. John Lott was a brilliant young professor of economics at MSU awhile back. He too ran afoul of the university "establishment" due to his conservative views. He was shunned and ostracized by his colleagues. Eventually he left and took a job in a friendlier environment.

To sum up, side by side with the good they do, some of our campuses have become incubators of the bizarre, the perverse, even the destructive. In some cases, rather than being a haven for civilized discourse and the free exchange of ideas, they have become indoctrination centers for the left. All at taxpayer expense. This situation must change.

House Bill 525 is a modest step in the direction of accountability and balance in our university system. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I sincerely urge all of you to vote "YES" on HB 525. Thank you.



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